

**FRIENDS OF THE SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR
WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC)
c/o National WIC Association**

July 31, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

For decades, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) has delivered quality nutrition services in community-based clinical settings to improve pregnancy and birth outcomes and promote healthy child development. In order to sustain much-needed program modifications to provide services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, **we urge that any final legislative package that responds to the public health and economic crises include an extension of USDA waiver authority for WIC services through at least September 30, 2021.**

Under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was vested with authority to waive statutory physical presence requirements and other regulatory barriers to access as a result of COVID-19. That authority is set to expire on September 30 of this year. Since March, every state has obtained a WIC program waiver to modify service delivery and protect the health and safety of WIC staff and clients. The vast majority of states have implemented remote services, which allow for new families to obtain WIC services through telephone, video conferencing, or other online platforms. Other states have adopted curbside models that minimize risk while providing services at clinic sites.

These modifications are necessary health and safety steps to delivering services and meeting the needs of WIC participants. Since February, WIC has served an increasing number of families – reversing nationwide trends of caseload decline and reaching families that are newly eligible due to loss of employment or income. Several states have reported significant increases in participation since February 2020 – including Kentucky (8%) and California (11%). Should these waivers not be extended, WIC clinics will be forced to open prematurely, eligible families will be deterred from seeking nutrition support, and more families will be put at risk of contracting COVID-19.

State flexibility is essential as WIC agencies plan for continued remote services, safe and thoughtful reopening of clinics, or other modifications to adapt to the spread of COVID-19 within their own communities. This is especially pertinent given updated recommendations from the Centers on Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicating that pregnant people may have increased risk for severe illness and adverse pregnancy outcomes upon contracting COVID-19. Additional waiver authority is critical for state and local governments, for providers, and for the health of the next generation of Americans.

Extending waiver authority is the bare minimum to ensure safe ongoing nutrition support. As Congress considers an appropriate recovery package, robust investment in the federal nutrition programs is crucial. In addition to waiver extensions, we urge consideration of other key nutrition provisions – including enhancing the value of WIC’s fruit and vegetable voucher, an increase in the benefit levels for SNAP households, and extending and expanding the Pandemic-EBT Program. All of these provisions are needed to ensure that our nation’s children have access to nutritious foods throughout the pandemic.

We thank you for your diligent work to address the nutrition and economic impacts of this public health crisis and look forward to working with you on swiftly advancing additional COVID-related relief. Please direct any questions to Brian Dittmeier, Senior Public Policy Counsel at the National WIC Association, at bdittmeier@nwica.org.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

1,000 Days
A Better Balance
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
African American Health Alliance
American Academy of Pediatrics*
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Heart Association
American Public Health Association
American Public Human Services Association
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists
Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Alliance to End Hunger
Bread for the World
Bright Future Lactation Resource Centre
Catholic Charities USA
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Children’s Defense Fund
Children’s HealthWatch
Childbirth and Postpartum Professional Association (CAPPA)
Coalition on Human Needs
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Danone North America, PBC
EKF Diagnostics, Inc. d/b/a Stanbio Laboratory
First Focus Campaign for Children
Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
HealthConnect One
Hunger Free America
Islamic Relief USA
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
March of Dimes

MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
MomsRising
NAACP
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association of Counties (NACo)
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Community Action Partnership
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Employment Law Project
National Human Services Assembly
National REACH Coalition
National WIC Association
National Women's Law Center
Nurse-Family Partnership
Partnership for America's Children
Poligon Education Fund
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
RESULTS
Share Our Strength
Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior
Sustainable Food Policy Alliance
Trust for America's Health
Union for Reform Judaism
United Fresh Produce Association
United States Breastfeeding Committee, Inc.
Women's Rights and Empowerment Network
ZERO TO THREE

***State Organizations**

Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Maryland Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Michigan Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Minnesota Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Nebraska Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
North Carolina Pediatric Society
Pennsylvania Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Tennessee Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Utah Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Wisconsin Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

cc: The Honorable Pat Roberts
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
The Honorable Bobby Scott
The Honorable Virginia Foxx